



Oklahoma

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry
Forestry Services Division
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Project Name Landowner Workshop: The Emerging Carbon Market

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Abstract

Oklahoma enacted the Carbon Sequestration Enhancement Act in 2001. The Oklahoma Carbon Sequestration Enhancement Act called for an Advisory Committee to be formed and specified membership, with members to be appointed by the Governor. The Act required the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, with assistance from the advisory committee, to submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2002.

Recently, a number of organizations working as aggregators such as Iowa Farm Bureau have begun marketing programs in many states surrounding Oklahoma. These programs are targeting private landowners to inform them of carbon credit marketing opportunities. Activities indicate these programs will move into Oklahoma in the near future.

Oklahoma Forestry Services (OFS) intends to conduct forest landowner workshops on the topic of the emerging carbon market within the state. The goal is to provide our citizens with the non-biased information they need to make informed decisions about their forested lands. This project includes one workshop. A second, similar, workshop would be conducted depending upon the demand generated and our ability to accommodate the number of participants.

Partnering Agencies and Groups/Individuals:

OFS will partner with the following organizations and individuals to accomplish the desired outcomes of this project: OSU Extension Forester, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Oklahoma Forestry Association, Oklahoma Woodland Owners Association, Cross Timbers Forestry, and the state's major utilities.

Project Location:

This project will provide for landowner education on the topic of the emerging forest carbon market. This is an international, national and statewide issue.

Expected Completion Quarter: Q4 FY 2008

Total Federal Funding Request: \$12,972

Total Proposal Budget: (Including Federal Match)

Project Expenditures	Organizations		
	Grant	State	Total
Printing/Advertising	\$4,500		\$4,500
Personnel	\$5,000	\$10,750	\$15,750
Facilities	\$500		\$500
Travel	\$750		\$750
Subtotal	\$10,750	\$10,750	\$21,500
IDC (20.67%)	\$2,222	\$2,222	\$4,444
Total	\$12,972	\$12,972	\$25,944

Project Description:

Public interest in the issues related to global climate change is high and the issue of carbon sequestered in the forest and trees provides for an excellent opportunity to engage the public and increase the visibility of forestry within the state. Information and education for forestry professionals and the general public is needed, especially concerning an emerging issue such as carbon. There may be opportunities for existing landowner programs to incorporate carbon credit management and verification.

The Oklahoma Legislature enacted the Carbon Sequestration Enhancement Act in 2001. The Act called for an Advisory Committee to be formed and specified membership, with members to be appointed by the Governor. The Act required the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, with assistance from the advisory committee, to submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2002. In this report, forestlands and forestry practices were included as viable contributors to carbon sequestration in Oklahoma.

Recently, a number of organizations working as aggregators, such as the Iowa Farm Bureau, have begun marketing programs in many states surrounding Oklahoma. These programs are targeting private landowners to inform them of carbon credit marketing opportunities. Activities indicate these programs will move into Oklahoma in the near future.

However, Oklahoma's forest landowners have little understanding of the carbon market, the potential for their lands to sequester carbon or the forestry practices that are accepted within the Chicago Climate Exchange. OFS believes that the carbon market could provide at least some opportunity for forest landowners in the near future, but that a great deal of education is needed to help them understand the issues and mechanisms involved.

OFS intends to conduct forest landowner workshops on the topic of the emerging carbon market within the state. The goal is to provide our citizens with the non-biased information they need to make informed decisions about their forested lands. This project includes one workshop. A second, similar, workshop would be conducted depending upon the demand generated and our ability to accommodate the number of participants.

Evaluation Criteria Discussion:

National and Regional Relevance:

Global climate change and its potential ramifications are generating considerable interest and concern among the scientific community, business and industry, government at all levels and the public at large. It is unknown to what extent rising CO₂ levels could be mitigated and reduced through forestry, or other practices, but it is generally accepted that planting trees and improving the growth rate of established forests are proven methods for sequestering carbon from the atmosphere for long periods of time. Carbon sequestration is one of many ecosystem services provided by forests. Raising the awareness of landowners about the potential for participating in the emerging carbon market will enhance the values of our forestlands and provide one more incentive to maintain those lands as productive forest instead of converting them to cabin sites, housing developments, or pasturelands. Traditional forest products markets are gradually shrinking in northeastern Oklahoma, eliminating one economic incentive for forest management. To maintain the health and productivity of these important forested watersheds, we have to find better economic mechanisms to encourage owners to ignore growing conversion pressures. Because Oklahoma lies at the western fringes of the South's commercial forests, it can be very challenging to identify incentives that owners find attractive and economically viable. The carbon market may be one way to get more landowners involved in some level of forest improvement work on their lands, which will result in more lands providing the full suite of forest ecosystem services.

Prioritization:

Current low values for carbon storage, and the emphasis on "additionality," will likely result in owners of the most productive sites being more interested in planting trees and improving forest growth, strictly based on the economics involved. Those lands are considered part of Oklahoma's most important forestlands. The carbon workshop will be open to all interested parties, but it is more likely that follow-up action will take place on the best sites and most important forests.

Meaningful Scale:

The intention of the workshop is that it will result in a more cohesive approach to carbon marketing in Oklahoma, where groups of landowners will participate, thereby affecting larger landscapes rather than single scattered properties across the state.

Collaboration:

OFS has identified the following potential federal, state and private stakeholders and collaborators to accomplish the desired outcomes of this project: Extension Forester-Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Oklahoma Forestry Association, Oklahoma Woodland Owners Association, Cross Timbers Forestry, and the general public. Major utility companies, including Oklahoma Gas & Electric, and American Electric Power (Public Service Company of Oklahoma) have expressed considerable interest in moving forward with carbon markets and stand ready to assist OFS with the educational effort, as well as follow-up program development needs.

Outcomes:

This project will initially educate forest landowners and key stakeholders in the issues associated with carbon marketing and certification, helping identify specific opportunities for the state's landowners to participate in this emerging ecosystem service from forestland. Long term, the project should offer one additional incentive for landowners to retain lands as forest rather than converting to other land uses, especially as the carbon market becomes more viable and carbon credits more valuable. A carbon payment, even if relatively small, may also stimulate more landowners to initiate active management of their lands, resulting in improvements in all the ecosystem services provided by forestlands.

Technology:

This workshop will target landowners with critical forestlands as identified by the Southern Region's Forest Land Resource Assessment.

Integrated Delivery:

The workshop will offer an opportunity to involve other parties interested in carbon markets, and OFS programs in Forest Stewardship, urban and community forestry, and forest regeneration. The project will also enhance the partnerships between OFS and OSU Cooperative Extension, private consulting foresters and private utilities.

Leverage:

Utility companies are already active partners with OFS in this arena, and will support the workshop and any follow-up program development efforts that are necessary.

Influence Positive Change:

Raising landowner awareness will result in more informed actions as the carbon market develops. A monetary incentive, even though relatively small at present, may encourage landowners to retain their lands as forest, even when faced with development pressures. A reward to good forest management will also lead to increased landowner interest in forest improvements, resulting in positive changes across the landscape. This workshop will also help OFS raise awareness throughout the state of the variety of ecosystem services provided by forestlands, in addition to carbon sequestration.

Timeliness:

OFS is already exploring the opportunities for carbon sequestration on forestlands in Oklahoma, and is ready for a workshop to stimulate further program development. Marketing of the landowner workshop will begin no later than the second quarter FY2008. The workshop will be held no later than the fourth quarter FY2008.